



# ASSIGNMENT: MEDIA LITERACY

200 W. Baltimore Street ♦ Baltimore MD 21201 ♦ Nancy S. Grasmick, State Superintendent of Schools

August 2001

## What is Assignment: Media Literacy?

Assignment: Media Literacy was created by Dr. Renee Hobbs, one of the nation's leading authorities on media education, as part of a unique public/private partnership between Discovery Communications, Inc. and the Maryland State Department of Education to assist schools and school systems in the wake of high-profile national school safety incidents. Through this partnership, Maryland was the first state to establish a comprehensive, statewide initiative in media literacy that crosses several academic disciplines.

*Assignment: Media Literacy* is **primarily** a comprehensive media literacy curriculum resource designed to: help students build critical thinking and communication skills as they analyze messages in the media, and **secondarily**, to support state standards in language arts, social studies, and health at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Family consumer science teachers, media specialists, and guidance counselors who teach classroom lessons can also utilize these materials.

## What is Media Literacy?

Media Literacy is a set of skills that enables students to access, analyze, and critically evaluate all forms of media messages from printed text to television, film and video, computer games and the Internet.

## What are the key concepts of media literacy?

- All messages are "constructions," which means that they are assembled, edited, selected and designed.
- Messages are representations, and therefore, do not always portray an accurate picture of reality.
- Messages have economic purposes.
- Individuals interpret messages differently.
- Media have unique characteristics.

## How does Assignment: Media Literacy benefit Maryland students?

*Assignment: Media Literacy* engages and motivates student interest by utilizing topics and media they use on a daily basis. It builds critical thinking and communication skills by allowing students to not only decode messages but also to analyze and compose them. It also bridges the gap between the classroom and the culture by bringing relevance to the student's learning.

## What are the special features of this project?

- Aligned with MSDE State Content Standards
- Interdisciplinary learning activities to connect themes in health, language arts, social studies, fine and performing arts, and family and consumer science
- Print literacy emphasis which strengthens reading and writing skills
- 18 creative production activities with assessment rubrics
- Character Education connections
- Home – school connections to support family communication and exploration of community resources

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***How many people  
have been trained?***

To date, 1,436 educators from 20 local school systems, 20 public librarians from the Enoch Pratt Library, and 10 staff from MSDE have been trained in the *Assignment: Media Literacy* curriculum.

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***Where can I find  
more information?***

To obtain more information about the *Assignment: Media Literacy* program, including upcoming training dates, please contact Lynn R. Widdowson, Staff Specialist, at (410) 767-0277 or e-mail [lwiddowson@msde.state.md.us](mailto:lwiddowson@msde.state.md.us). You may also visit the *Assignment: Media Literacy* website at [www.assignmentmedialit.com](http://www.assignmentmedialit.com).



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